

# THIS SATURDAY EVENING POST

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## SELF-DEPENDENCE.

BY MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Wary of myself, and sick of asking  
What I am, and what I ought to be,  
At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears me  
Forward, forwards o'er the star-lit sea.  
And a look of passionate desire  
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:  
"Ye, who from my childhood up have calmed  
me,  
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!"  
"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye Stars, ye Waters,  
In my heart your mighty charm renew!  
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,  
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!"  
From the intense, clear, star-drawn vault of  
heaven,  
Over the fit sea's unquiet way,  
In the rustling night air came the answer—  
"Wouldst thou be as these are? Live as  
they!"  
"Unfrighted by the silence round them,  
Undisturbed by the sights they see,  
Those demand not that the things without them  
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy."  
"And with joy the stars perform their shining,  
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll,  
For alone they live, nor pine with nothing  
All the lever of some differing soul."  
"Rounded by themselves, and unobtrusive  
In what state God's other works may be,  
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
These attain the mighty life you see."  
O, air-born Voice! long since, severely clear,  
A cry like thine in my own heart I hear,  
"Be more to thyself, and know that he  
Who finds himself loses his misery!"

## HEARTS ERRANT.

CHAPTER XIV.

PARIS IN NOVEMBER.

Rainy and sloppy enough, but, nevertheless, with a certain jaunty gaiety about it as different as possible from the heavy, solemn, deeply foggy spirit in which London takes the same month. This is how our party found Paris in November. With a thousand gas-lamps from roofs and restaurants, reflected in a thousand rain-pools upon the streaming Boulevards—with a thousand flowers spreading themselves over the well-washed pavements, jocosely, gaudiously, fresh from Hayre, Harzard, and Orsard, or just released from the awful solitude of those French country houses which are like properties in chambers, or private madhouses, or, at the very least, in the way of the Parisian's "chambre," which stand for the same thing in England. "Paris is France." The Parisian suffers an annual period of exile from his dear Paris of his, and having submitted with more or less of patience to the intolerable tyranny of custom, returns to congratulate himself and ever so qualifiedly he meets that the reality proves more completed, and that he finds himself once more referred to life and—Paris.

It was fortunate that Olive had her own all-compensating resources, for it must be confessed that before Paris was reached she was in insufficiently bad odor with all her companions, save, indeed, Miss Ursula, who was not likely ever to misunderstand her, and Colonel St. Maur, who began to think that he was not likely ever to understand her. It happens sometimes that a tide of misanthropy and cynicism sets in against an innocent person—a tide that gathers volume as it rolls, and can be no means turned back until it has spent its strength, which is very bewildering to those lovers of justice whose experience of mundane disgruntlements has not yet been sufficient to convince them to the epidemic of truth turned together, and wrong looking for all the world like right, and right wearing an abashed face as if it were wrong.

Not that Olive was such a fool. By no means. Through all the sublime sorrows of that Swiss mountain she lived, as it were, in a dream—a grand, beautiful dream. Her soul drank in the glories of the Alpine scene, and trembled with admiring awe under the stately congress of cloud-crowned mountain kings. She reared her spirit on the "eternal snows" of the snow-capped hills which had been rooted in creation, and so her cheeks glowed there, and the great calm of Nature's majesty looked out of her deep, earnest eyes, over and beyond the cold glances and unimpassioned faces of her companions.

What a little witch it is! moved the Colonel, exclaiming, "I have never seen the face that was smiling back at the evening splendours of the light snows." She slipped through one's fingers in the quietest, calmest way. She quite bewitched the crowd of the sex that ever was, and she was a fine piece of acting in her way, and original—very—but I have no doubt the thing is simple enough. It is a woman's trick, when you know it, when I don't—no.

And the Colonel turned to her persisting studies, to which Olive and her young lady

friends sat, in pretty attitudes of exhaustion, with their backs to the sunset, resting from their long climb, and Isabel counter-posing a melancholy Pole whom she had managed to beckon on from Breuil, where he was arranging himself on *prince de la Roche* for the benefit of all whom it might concern. All this was patent enough to Colonel St. Maur's practised observation; he read them all, brilliant Clara included, like a well-oiled book. Just such characters as these, with a little better or worse acting, had always appeared in the vaudeville of life performed before him, and he was tired enough of them, as of everything else. He sat the play out, of course, and yawned as much as good breeding would permit; but he was awfully weary; he would have given something handsome to have exchanged places with the open-mouthed rustic in the pit, to whom all the glitter was gold, and all the seeming real. He was so used to time and paste that he did not believe in the ring of the true metal, or recognize the flash to the real stone.

Mrs. Decies' motherly presence had, of course, told her why her son turned back from Camille, and, grudge as she was, she could not forgive Olive. Mothers are sometimes hard upon young ladies who accept their come, but depend upon it they would have been harder still if the young ladies had refused them. Olive sought in vain to propitiate Reginald's mother, partly from real liking for the lady herself, partly from a tender, womanly remorse for the mischief she had unintentionally done. But not a crystal glimmer shone above the track of the travellers was colder or more impenetrable than the offended mother, and poor Olive, distressed and discouraged, was fain to fall back upon her aunt's ever-ready sympathy.

Isabel and Jessie Bohun had a more personal cause of displeasure against Olive. It was intolerable that this little silent, abstracted creature, so unattractive, too, should monopolize the male interest of the party. And that little air of unconsciousness was so provoking, and so stupidly successful!

And Clara! Well, Clara had her own private reasons for feeling exceedingly venomous towards her sister, although you would never have guessed it. Indeed, so sweet and tender was she, that you might have arrived at a very different conclusion—in the way of the Parisian's world. Good health, energy, and a due sense of the becomingness of good temper, kept Clara always smiling and urbane; and the quality which these represent has a great deal more than its net value in the social estimate. Olive's little bursts of impetuosity, her "righteous indignations," might be worth more in reality, but they stood at considerably less than zero in the particular balance-sheet.

Also, what did the world know or care about the intense feelings which kept this little girl silent and abstracted? What of the report of love and devotion with which her soul flared and whirled when brought face to face with the grandeur of God's creation? When she could have cried out in very pain at the oppression of a sublimity of beauty that seemed to demand more than mortal powers of conception? The bright sparkle of Clara's wit, the lively rattle of Isabel Bohun's clever conversation, were a great deal more interesting to most people—and no wonder, perhaps. To those young ladies this Alpine paradise was but one of the rights that must be "done," a little tedious and tedious in place, but got through with as quickly as possible, and an ever-varying stream of fellow-travellers. If Camille, and Reginald, and the Duchesse Toul were a long way up, and sunset on the right was "a pull," and they could not be left behind, there was compensation on the gay shoes of Lake Lemano, and an opening vista of Paris delights beyond the snow-capped peaks and the thundering avalanche. And the "something to talk about afterwards" carried us through a great deal of present effort and discomfort.

They were very gay in Paris. The English ambassador was first cousin to Mrs. Decies, and the Bohuns had spent last winter in Paris, and had been received everywhere from the Embassy to the *Grand Hotel de l'Europe*. And a hereditary English being, representing her quality of English being, Clara found herself likewise received with open arms by the cream of Parisian society. Only the Tulerie were closed to her—a very important and meritorious "only." But her presentation at the Embassy had been delayed until after her marriage, and the English demand that the circumstances of her engagement rendered the delay inadvisable, and so the "open season" to the Continental courts was waiting. She had the triumph of her Parisian debut all to herself, for a few days after her arrival at M. de Toul's, Miss Ursula caught a severe cold, which, like the French doctor's meddling with an English constitution, or something else, developed into low fever, which entirely confined the poor lady to her room, and kept Olive in devoted attendance upon her. And the fever not being of a serious or dangerous complexion, I am not sure that the two did not enjoy very much their enforced seclusion.

Contemporaneous with Miss Ursula's first symptoms of sore throat happened those important political events in England to which we have already alluded, and which so entirely changed Colonel St. Maur's views. A turn of the wheel brought the Duke of Argyll into place as premier, and took him from his studio to the fulfilment of high and responsible public duties. A brief note, inclosed in two sheets of the duchess's fine, bold handwriting, apprised Clara of this fact, and breathed a tender regret over the "Love of the Angels," which must needs await the country's leisure. Clara read this note aloud in the drawing-room, when she came down dressed for a ball at the Austrian ambassador's, and Colonel St. Maur looked at her the while from under the drooping lids, which this time hardly softened a sudden, quick flash of the steel-gray eyes. Isabel Bohun, at least, caught it, and scanned Clara curiously, as she stood with her white cloak falling from her marble shoulders, and her flower-crowned head swaying in graceful state over a subject array of soft lace and tulle, and delicately tinted bloom. Isabel thought she had never seen Clara looking so beautiful, and there was a little satisfied elation in the conviction that the Colonel thought so too. That "little creature" did not enjoy quite such a monopoly as she had seemed to do.

For four weeks Miss Ursula's fever kept her a prisoner, and Olive, in the intervals of her nursing and watching, took walks and drives under the guardianship of Miss Parks. She could not have asked the chaperone of Mrs. Decies, even if that offended mother had not been in perpetual requisition for the long list of visiting engagements which filled up the days and nights of the other young ladies. From time to time she had sallied forth on a "shopping" expedition. The last of these purchases was made in a flower-shop—one of those delicious bowers of bloom which we come upon with so much refreshment in Paris, and which we should be so glad to find in the dingy streets of dear old smoky London. By the time they reached this last post in their excursion, Miss Ursula found herself weary, a glimmering mirror, and this mirror was opposite the door leading into the shop, which door Madame had left partly open on her return to her room. Miss Ursula, too weary to talk, closed her eyes and lay back in her chair. Olive assumed herself by watching in the mirror Madame's ever-recurring customers. First a Parisian dandy jumped down from his English "top-cart" at the door, and, holding his hat in his hand, saluted Madame with a "bonjour" as if she had been a duchess. He selected a superb ball bouquet, drew off his leather-colored glove to write an address, and bowed himself out again to his "top-cart." Next a *grande dame* stepped from her handsome carriage, and carried away with her a sweet atmosphere of *rouge de Paris*. Then a best-dressed, with a market-basket on her arm, and the daintiest of white gauffered caps on her head, chose a spray of pink roses, rubs a drop on her cheek, and carried them lovingly in her hand back to her little kitchen on the third-floor in the Rue St. Antoine. Next a sparkling girl with bright black eyes, and a rich bloom upon her clear brown cheek, attended by another white-capped maid, hovered from blossom to blossom like a brilliant butterfly, choosing a cascade for her first ball, and utterly distracted amongst the rival claims of scarlet geranium which became her so well, and white carnations which were so charming, and blood-tinted arums which Madame wore into ravishing sprays, and held up for her final subjugation.

Madame's next customer was Colonel St. Maur. He was perfectly unconscious of the window he first fell upon, as he rapidly, and with that mastery of motion which impresses one so much in some people, helped himself from Madame's vase to the flowers he wanted, choosing them without a moment's hesitation, and arranging them as he went on with a taste and skill which drew exclamations of delight from the beautiful *Parvules*. Purple bellflowers and crossed leaves of verbena, creamy roses and rich crimson buds of *Camellia*, quivering sprays of light maiden-hair fern, blue violets and almost white buds breaking from their mossy shell, the white edged round with dark, glossy leaves of myrtle, and fringed with delicate lace. Olive wondered a little for whose pleasure this sweet compliment was intended, and then she grew nervously anxious lest Auguste should return and betray their neighborliness to the Colonel. Fortune favored her, however; the Colonel completed his arrangements, handed a gold piece over the counter, and was crossing the Place de la Madeleine before Auguste arrived, beautifully valiant, exclaiming the delay for which his young mistress inwardly blamed him.

Certainly something had gone wrong with Clara that day. She came late to the dinner-table, and for the first time in her life she was flustered and fidgety in manner. She kept Mrs. Decies and the carriage which was to take them to the Duchesse de Tremblay's. "At home" waiting full half-an-hour, and then she came down without her gloves, and whilst Parks was bringing the gloves she discovered that she had also forgotten her fan, and just as she was coming in the carriage she stood on the step and left her bouquet on the dressing-table, all of which to

ging him, in Mrs. Decies' hearing, to reserve his judgment of any extraordinary action he might see performed by a gray hat and cloak.

Colonel St. Maur acknowledged that he had been present when the gray apparition had appeared to Olive and her maid, but added that he had not himself seen the likeness the others had found so extraordinary.

"People see these things so differently," he considered, with a French shrug of the shoulders. After this Olive stayed at home. Miss Ursula was improving so rapidly, that in a few days the doctor promised her she should venture out in a close carriage. Olive would not risk a second encounter with the Colonel. She was thankful now that this one had come at the end of her ramble instead of at the beginning—that those dreamy hours spent among the "dim, religious" beauties of St. Sulpice and St. Roch, among the Claudes, and Rubens, and Raphael of the Louvre, and under the grand historical shadow of the Tuilleries, had not been disturbed by such an unwelcome intrusion. All her feeling of freedom was ended; the streets of Paris were so much haunted as had been the mystic region of the Alps.

The early December weather was "clear and bracing," and Miss Ursula grew strong again, not strong enough for late hours and crowded rooms, but strong enough to see, one by one, all the wonders of Paris—strong enough even to spend a day at Versailles, and another at Vincennes. But these last were under protest from both the doctor and Olive.

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regularities were unprecedented in the composed experience of Clara. And Olive, flying to the rescue, suddenly discovered that the bouquet which she was carrying was Colonel St. Maur's. Not that the discovery surprised her much; in foreign life a bouquet is the commonest compliment, and Clara received at least half-a-dozen every day. But Clara's unusual discomposure did surprise her, and sitting over her bedroom fire that night she traced the cause—the Indian mail was two days overdue.

## CHAPTER XV.

ARLINGTON AT CHRISTMAS.

A grain of mustard-seed, we all know—or ought to know—may grow into a spreading tree; but who can tell what a forest of mischief may spring from a single root of scandal? The seed is winged, and every idle breath of gossip blows it hither and thither, like a soft of thistle-down, and every evil on which it falls helps to fructify it; and the plant that is easily pulled up when it is yet but a tender seedling germ, breaks up the earth, and leaves an ugly yawning gap, which buries a hundred promising young souls within it, when once it has come to its growth—all unless as that growth may be.

Miss Ursula's illness detained her party in Paris to late that Christmas and Arlington were upon them before they were ready for either. They hurried through such necessary business as had to be settled at home, and leaving Miss Hetty and the Armitage steward to make Christmas for Christmas, they joined the duke's guests two days before Christmas Eve. Lady Theodora Thynne rode with her father to meet her future connections at the station. She had not inherited her mother's talents and graces. She was quite an ordinary young lady, dressed well, had a sallow complexion, had been perfectly well brought up, and engaged, by a sort of family arrangement, since she was fifteen years old, to a cousin of her own, on the mother's side. She had never had any temptation, either from temperament or circumstance, to indulge in flirtation, and she had a great horror of, as well as some curiosity about, the genus "flirt."

"I am longing to see this pretty *fleur-de-gerais* of Gerald's papa," she said, as she rode along by her side through the muddy lanes, with her hands abominably splashed.

Lady Theodora had been at Mentone with her sister-in-law when Clara had been introduced to her family.

"Pretty" seemed the duke; "that's not half strong enough, my dear. She's a lovely creature."

"And the sister, papa?"

"A nice little thing—very. Looks out of kilter, doesn't she? You must take special charge of her, Tom."

That's correct upon lip curled. She had to be careful, though, for the duke was, as a rule, very tolerant of what he called "ladies' scandal."

"I should say she is better now, papa. I heard of her on the Rhine, among herself with a Colonel St. Maur."

"Oh—what?" cried her father, who was not exactly listening. "Engaged to Colonel St. Maur, did you say?"

"No, I did not understand quite that," hastily corrected Lady Theodora; "but she has some sort of fancy for him, or he for her."

"I'm my sister, I am very glad to hear it." The duke was thoroughly good-natured; he liked to see everybody about him happy, and so he had observed that love affairs and engagements went a long way towards the apparent attainment of this end, he took so lively an interest in all such matters as Miss Hetty or any lady gossip of his acquaintance, and he held certain matrimonial views "strenuous," from which his family could not succeed in converting him, although they did make another effort to set the orthodoxy of the thing before him.

"But, papa," she explained, "you don't understand; it's not at all a good thing."

"Why not?" questioned her father; "the fellow's well-bred—first cousin to Lord Ovenshaw—a very agreeable man, too; remember I met him at Chiswick last year. The ladies seemed to think him handsome, and if this little girl thinks so too, and likes him, why shouldn't she marry him?"

"But, papa, you would not have people marry without a proper income and position, would you? Colonel St. Maur is not an eligible match; he is not—I don't know what he is, but he is a younger son's younger son, you know, and—"

There was a pause, and her father and friend looked at each other, and if this little girl thinks so too, and likes him, why shouldn't she marry him?

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[illegible]







run away as that faithless chap of mine did. Something's wrong, though, I can see, by her staring at me in that stony way, and never opening her mouth to speak. I say, Hester, is anything—Dance take them strings again?"

The countess's apostrophe was addressed to her shoe-string. To be sure, Mary Barber had put new pale green ribbons into her shoes, and one or other of them had been coming untied all the way to her great wrath. Laying down her umbrella on the edge of the grass, and her folded handkerchief, which she had carried in her hand, atop of it, she stooped down and tied the shoe, giving the knot a good tug as additional security.

"Now, then, come undone again, and I'll—Bless me! where's she gone?"

In raising her head Mary Barber missed her sister; the stile was vacant. Hastening to it, she climbed over into the next field, and there stood in what might be called a paroxysm of astonishment, for no trace whatever was to be seen of Mrs. Pickering. It was a large field, a hedge dividing it from the one she had just traversed, the path running across it before her. She looked here, she looked there, she looked everywhere, in vain. Mary Barber had once traversed herself to witness the performance of a conjuror in the large room of the Hall, at Worcester; she began to think he must have been at work here.

"Hester!" she called out, raising her voice to its utmost pitch, "Hester, where's he gone to?"

The air took away the sound, and a bird aloft seemed to echo it, but there was no other answer. The woman stood like one moonstruck. Was it conjuring? or what else was it? The hedge, a trim, well-kept, cropped hedge, afforded no spot for concealment, there was no ditch or any other hiding-place—nothing but the broad open field, and no human being, save herself, stirring in it.

"Well, this beats bull-baiting," ejaculated Mary Barber, in the broad country phraseology in vogue in those days. "I'd better pinch myself to see whether I be awake or dreaming."

She turned herself about from side to side, she went back over the stile to the field she had traversed, and stared about there, but no trace could she see of Mrs. Pickering. Finally she passed over the stile again, and stood a moment to revolve matters.

"She must have gone off somewhere on the run while I'd got my eye down on that dashed scoundrel," was the conclusion the woman came to. "And more idiot she, what she knows running always brings on that queer pain at her heart."

It might have been a reasonable supposition that there been anywhere to run to; that is, had the field not been so broad and wide as to admit a possibility of her running out of sight. In good truth there was no such possibility. Mary Barber continued her way across the field, and then, instead of pursuing her road to Worcester, she turned aside to the house of the Pickering. That her sister could not have got back to it she knew, for the only way was the one she took. Trying the back door, she found it fastened, and, on passing round to the front, that was fastened also. There was no carriage waiting at the gate; on the contrary, everything seemed quiet and shut up. Mary Barber gave a sharp knock.

"One would think you were all dead," she cried, as a maid-servant opened the door. "They are gone, I suppose."

"Yes, they are gone," was the girl's reply. "My mistress left about ten minutes since."

"More than that, I know," was the answering remark. "What made her come and meet me, Hester?"

"She didn't come," said Betsy.

"She did come," said Mary Barber.

"Why, my goodness gracious, the girl do you want to terrify me out of my senses?" retorted Mary Barber in anger. "She came on as far as the Hollow Field, and sat herself on the stile there, waiting for me to come up. I've got the use of my eyes, I hope."

"Well, I don't know," returned the girl dubiously. "I was with her at the moment she was starting, and I'm sure she's not thought of going then. She was just going out of the door, taking her hat and gloves, when she turned back into the parlor and put down her green parcel, telling me to bring her small silk umbrella instead; it might rain, she said, for as it looked. And more than that, Hester, she says to me, 'for it don't want two minutes of the half hour, and I don't get to All Saints' in time.'"

"What half hour?" asked Mary Barber, in a loud, dispassionate tone.

"The half hour after tea. Sure enough, in a minute or two our clock struck six."

"Your clock must be uncommon wrong in its reckoning then," was the woman's rejoinder. "A half past ten she was stuck on the stile looking out for me. It's about ten minutes ago of going then. She was just going out of the door, taking her hat and gloves, when she turned back into the parlor and put down her green parcel, telling me to bring her small silk umbrella instead; it might rain, she said, for as it looked. And more than that, Hester, she says to me, 'for it don't want two minutes of the half hour, and I don't get to All Saints' in time.'"

"After all, she has not taken her umbrella," returned the girl. "I couldn't find it in the stand, off to the kitchen, all the rest of the time. I was there, but my mistress's silk one, and when I ran back to her, I thought it must be that one, she said. 'Come at a fine pace, then, Mary Barber, which you know is not good for her, for she was already out of sight, so I set out the door and drew the bolt. It's a pity she drove it off so late.'"

"What made her drive it off?"

"Well, there was one or two reasons. Her new lawn gown, such a beauty it is, never was put on in this morning. I'd let that fashionable Miss Kestrel drive her another, I would—and when my mistress had got it on, it wouldn't come to the waist by the breadth of your two fingers, and she'd get her pain very bad, and couldn't be expected. So she had to find it up again, and put on her turkish robe."

"I saw," interrupted Mary Barber, cutting the recitation short. "I say, Hester, where's she now?"

"I don't know," replied the girl, with a shrug. "Mr. Barber said it is present to be. She didn't want to wear it, she said it was too grand, but he laughed at her. The thing was just draped."

"And now, my obedient thing," she said, "I have to go. The thing was just draped."

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with goodness, as her in a Chaney crape shawl; and Richard must have more money than this to have bought it."

"And where's she now, then?" asked Betsy.

"To whom the argument certainly appeared conclusive. "Gone on by herself to the church?"

"Never you mind," returned Mary Barber, not choosing to betray her ignorance upon the unsatisfactory point. "Don't you contradict your betters again, Betsy dear."

Betsy humbly took the reproach.

"Why could she not have had a carriage, and went properly?" returned Mary Barber. "It might have cost money, but a son's marriage comes first in a lifetime."

"The carriage came, and took off Mr. Richard, and she wouldn't go in it," said the girl. And then she proceeded, dropping her voice to a whisper, to tell of the unpleasantness of the previous evening, and of the subsequent events of the morning. Mr. William was up first, and went out without breakfast, leaving her to go with her to the office as usual, and should not attend the wedding. This she had to tell her mistress and Mr. Richard when they came down stairs; her mistress seemed dreadfully grieved, she looked as white as a sheet, and as soon as breakfast was over, she wrote a letter, and sent it off to Worcester to Mr. William. "It was to tell him to come back and dress himself, and go with her to the wedding, I know," concluded the girl, "and she's waiting for him, she would not go with Mr. Richard when the carriage came, and why she stayed, herself, till the last minute. But Mr. William never came, and Hill's not come back either."

"Then why on earth did she come to meet me, instead of making the best of her way to the church?" demanded Mary Barber.

"It's that she didn't do, I'm sure," returned the girl; "she never had no thoughts of going to meet you."

"If you say that again, I'll—Why, who's this?"

The closing of the little iron gate at the foot of the garden had caused her to turn, and she saw William Pickering. He was flushed with the rapid walk from the town—conceivably were not to be hired at last will them in Worcester as they are now—and came up with a smile on his good-humored face.

"I hope my mother's gone," he called out.

"Yes, sir," answered Betsy.

"So, you and Richard have been quarrelling again, I hear, and you must go off in a temper this morning," was Mary Barber's reproving salutation. "I'm glad you've had the grace to think better of it, Master William."

The young man laughed.

"The truth is, my mother's note was so peremptory—in a sort—that I had no choice but to obey it," he answered. "I was not in the office when Hill left it, but I came as soon as I could. Some hot water, Betsy. Look sharp."

"You'll not get to All Saints' in time," said Mary Barber.

"I'll have a try for it; they may be late themselves. What time is it now?" he continued, as he bounded up the stairs.

As if to answer him, the large kitchen clock at that moment rang out the quarter to eleven. It was a clock that struck the quarters; as many kitchen clocks did in those old-fashioned days.

"Is that clock right?" asked Mary Barber, remembering her conclusion that it could not be.

"Yes, and feeling in a more upon the post yesterday. Just look at your watch, William, and tell me."

"It's never wrong," put in Betsy, as she came hurrying out of the kitchen with the jug of hot water, and probably deeming it a convenient juncture tacitly to maintain her opinion. "I don't vary a minute in a year."

She said true. Nevertheless, William Pickering, in courtesy to the request, halted on the stairs midway, and took his watch from his pocket.

"It is quite right," he said. "Beside, I know that must be just about the time. You wait for me in the parlor, Mary, and we'll go on together."

She turned into the parlor generally used, and waited for him. The boys had always called her "Mary," short, following the habit of their father and mother. On the table lay Mrs. Pickering's green parcel, just as she had put it down.

In five minutes he was down stairs again, dressed, as handsome a young man as all Worcester could have produced—upright, frank, merry. Mary Barber told him how his mother had come to meet her, and how she had suddenly disappeared. He laughed, and said Mary must have fallen into a door while trying to get on. They were passing through Hawick when the clock struck eleven.

"There!" exclaimed Mary Barber.

"Never mind," said he, gayly, "we shall get in for the time."

They took the lower road, as being the nearest, cutting off the corner by the north of St. John's, as well as the road, crossed the bridge over the river, and, passing between, and turned off to All Saints' Church just as the tardy bride party drove up.

"I hope they have not been waiting for me!" exclaimed William Pickering. "Which carriage is my mother's, I wonder? I shall take her in."

"She won't be in the carriage; she was going straight into the church," Betsy said so. "I snatched Mary Barber's exclamation; aggravated to find herself in the very midst of the alighting company, Richard Pickering drew up to his brother."

"Where's the mother?" he asked. "We have been waiting for her all this while."

"In the church, I think, if she's not with you. I am but come up myself now."

However, range their eyes as they would round the church when they got inside it, there was no sign of Mrs. Pickering. William, very anxious for the occasion, stood by the brother at the altar, his best man, and the ceremony proceeded. The bride was carried off behind a remote pillar, peeping surreptitiously round it to watch the party out of church, Richard leading her very prettily.

"I'll let the rock of my great-grandfather's below me," quoth she to the female pew-woman. And accordingly the "rock" did get up, and then Mary Barber started. She supposed Mrs. Pickering would be there, as did all. The conclusion drawn was, that she had not arrived in time for the ceremony, and so had gone straight to the surgeon's. His residence was not far from the church, and as Mary Barber slowly approached it, she saw quite a crowd of people coming from the opposite way, it was of whom she thought and as other of joyous. Halting at the door to stare at them—and they seemed to be reciprocating the compliment by staring at her in a curious manner—William Pickering came out.

"What can have become of my mother, Mary?" he exclaimed. "I'm going home to see after her. She's not at Mrs. Lee's."

"Why, where's she got to?" responded Mary Barber. "I'll tell you what, William Pickering," quickly added the woman, an idea flashing across her, "she's gone down with the quarrelling of you two boys, and has wandered away in the fields! I told you how strangely she stared at me from the stile."

"Nonsense!" said the young man.

"It is nonsense!" he—Whatever do you people want?" broke off Mary Barber.

For the persons she had noticed were surrounding them in a strange manner, hemming them in closely. The officer laid his arm upon William Pickering.

"I'm sorry to say that I must take you prisoner, sir."

"What for?" coolly asked William.

"For murder!" was the answer. And as the terrible words fell on Mary Barber's ear, a wild thought crossed her bewildered brain—Could he have murdered his mother? Of course it was only her own previous train of ideas, connected with the non-appearance of her sister, that induced it.

Not so, however. Amidst the dire confusion that reigned, and amid the indignant questioning of the bride party, who came flocking out in their gay attire, the particulars were made known. Mr. Stone, the old clerk, had been found dead on the office floor, an ugly wound in the back of his head. Richard Pickering, in his terror, next a yearning, beseeching glance on his brother, as much as to say, "Surely it has not come to this!"

The events of the morning, as connected with this, appeared to have been as follows.—Mr. Stone had gone to the office at nine o'clock, as usual, and there, to his surprise, found William Pickering, opening the letters. The latter said he was not going to his brother's wedding, and the old clerk reproved him for it. William did not like this; one word led to another, and several harsh things were spoken. So far the office servant testified, a man named Dance, whose wife lay in the warehouse amongst the hoop-makers, and who had come in for orders. They were still "jangling," Dance said, when he left them. Subsequently to this, William Pickering went out to the warehouse, and to one or two more places. On his return, he found that his mother's old room man-of-all-work, Hill, had left a note for him; a large brewer in the town, named Curry, was also waiting to see him on business. When Mr. Curry left, he opened the note, the contents of which may as well be given—

"William! you have never directly disobeyed me yet. I charge you, come back at once, and go with me to the church. Do you know that I have passed three parts of the night on my knees, praying that things may be cleared up between you and your brother!"

"Your loving Mother."

After that nothing clearly was known. William Pickering said that when he quitted the office to go home, in obedience to his mother's mandate to let Mr. Stone at his desk write for him a short while afterwards the old clerk was found lying on the floor, with a terrible wound in the back of his head. It was quite evident he had been struck down while bending over the desk. The man Dance, who was sought for in the warehouse, and found, spoke of the quarrelling he had heard, and hence the arrest of William Pickering.

Mary Barber's first thought, amidst the confusion and the shock, was of her sister. If not broken to her softly, the news might kill her; and the woman, abandoning all, and wine, and company, before she had come then, started off there and there in search of Mrs. Pickering, not knowing in the least where to look for her, but taking naturally the way to her home.

"She'll be coming in to see me, and I shall, perchance, meet her," was the passing thought.

Not Mrs. Pickering did Mary Barber meet, but Hill, the man. He was coming down the road in a state of excitement, and Mary Barber stared in blank disbelief at his news. His mistress had been found on her bed—dead.

In an incredibly short time the woman seemed to have disappeared, and the scene coming out of the house. It was quite true. Mrs. Pickering was dead. With her face looking as if it were turned to stone, Mary Barber went up to the chamber. Betsy, the servant, her tears dropping fast, told the tale.

When Mary Barber and Mr. William had departed, she bolted the door again, and went back to her work in the kitchen. By and by, it occurred to her to wonder whether the silk umbrella was safe upstairs, or whether it had been lost from the stand; a few weeks before, one of their custom umbrellas had been taken by a tramp. She ran up into her mistress's room to look, and there was startled by seeing her mistress. She was sitting in an arm-chair by the bedside, her head leaning wearily on her back, and her feet pressed on her heart; for the old lady's silk umbrella, her cover partially taken off, and by its side a bit of bread-and-butter, half eaten. At the first moment the girl thought she was asleep; but when she saw her face she knew it was something worse. Running out of the house in terror, she met Hill, who was then returning from Worcester, and sent him for the nearest surgeon. He came, and pronounced her to be quite dead. "She must have been dead," he said, "about an hour."

"What time was that?" interrupted Mary Barber, speaking sharply in her emotion.

"It was half past eleven."

There could not be the slightest doubt as to the facts of the case. While the servant was sent by Mr. Curry in search of the umbrella, Mrs. Pickering must have been unable to find it. Mrs. Pickering must have run upstairs to her chamber, either remembering that it was there, or to look for it. She found it, and was taking off the case, putting down the bread-and-butter she was eating, to do so a piece of bread-and-butter which the maid had just before brought to her; and must have then found herself ill, as down in the chair, and died immediately. Her own medical attendant had warned her that any great excitement might prove equally fatal.

"It was the oddest thing, and I thought it at the time, though it went out of my mind again, that she should have disappeared from sight so soon," sobbed Betsy. "I don't think I was away much more than a minute after the umbrella, and when I came back and found her gone, and looked on as the door, I couldn't see her anywhere. I looked in the garden, I looked down the path as far as my eyes would go. 'Why, my mistress must be dead,' says I, out loud. And she had left the front door wide open, too—and that ought to have told me she had not gone out of

it. And I, like a fool, never to have remembered that she might have run upstairs, but just bolted the door and went about my work."

Mary Barber made no comment; a strange awe was stealing over her. This had occurred at half-past ten. It was at precisely that time she saw her sister on the stile.

"Betsy," she presently said, her voice subdued to a whisper, "if your mistress had really gone out, as you supposed, was there any possibility of her coming in later without your knowledge?"

"No, there was not; she couldn't have done it," was the answer; and Mary Barber had felt perfectly certain that it had not been possible, though she asked it. The only way to Mrs. Pickering's from the stile was the path she had taken herself, and she knew her sister had not gone on before her.

"I never unbolted either of the doors, back or front, after she (as I thought) went out, except when I added the front for you," returned the girl. "I don't care to be sent the house by myself with 'em open since that man frightened me last winter. No, no; misadventure went out nor came in; she just went upstairs to her room, and died. The doctor says he don't suppose she had a moment's warning."

It must have been so. Mary Barber gazed upon her as she lay back, upon the bed, as she was the whole of the counterpane of what she had seen on the stile. The poor silk gown, looking as good as new; the really beautiful shawl, with its deep rich fringe; the white bonnet, which she now saw was of plain corded silk. The doctor had closed the eyes, and put the left hand down straight; otherwise she was as she was found. On the patchwork quilt of the bed lay the silk umbrella, the cover half taken off, and the bit of bread-and-butter, half eaten, lay beside it. Mary Barber gazed at all; and an awful conviction came over her, that it was her sister's spirit she had seen on the stile. Never from that hour did she quite lose the sensation of nameless dread it brought in its wake.

"You see, now, Mrs. Barber, you must have been mistaken in thinking my mistress went to meet you," said Betsy.

Mary Barber made no answer; she only looked out straight before her with a gaze that seemed to be very far away.

What with one calamity and the other—for the news of William Pickering's apprehension soon travelled up—the house was like a fair the whole of the day. Richard Pickering, bridegroom though he was, was up there; Mr. Law was there, after an examination, confirmed the other doctor's opinion as to the momentary sudden death; numerous friends and acquaintances came in and went out again. For once in her life, Mary Barber was oblivious of the home work, and her promise to return early for it. She took her bonnet off, borrowed a cap of her poor sister's, and remained.

William Pickering was taken before the magistrate in the Guildhall for examination, late in the afternoon. His brother attended it, and—very much to her surprise—so did Mary Barber. The accusation and the facts had revived themselves into something tangible out of their original confusion; the prisoner was able to understand the grounds they had against him; and the solicitor, whom he called to his assistance, drove up in a gig to Mrs. Pickering's, and took possession of Mary Barber.

"What's the good of your whirling me off to the Guildhall?" she resentfully asked of him, three times over, as he drove back into Worcester. "I don't know anything about it; I never was inside that office of the Pickering's in all my life."

"You'll see," said the lawyer, with a smile.

One thing was satisfactory—that old Mr. Stone had come to life again. The blow, though very hard one, had stunned, but not killed him. He was a fact, not injured beyond a reasonable probability of recovery. He had an knowledge of his assailant wherever it was, had come behind him, as he sat bending over his desk, and struck him down unaware.

The Guildhall was crowded a case exciting so much interest had rarely occurred in Worcester. Independent of the station in life of the prisoner, his good looks, his youth, his popularity with some people, there were the attendant circumstances—the marriage of his brother in the morning, the death of Mrs. Pickering. Of the last fact they did not tell him. "Let him get his examination over, poor fellow!" said they, in kindness. And he stood before the court, upright, frank, unfettered by grief.

"He must have done it in a moment of passion," said his sorrowing friends and the public; for the facts seemed too clear against him for disbeliever—the long-continued ill-feeling known to exist between him and the old clerk, who had persistently taken his brother Richard's part; the quarrelling of the morning, as heard by Dance, and which the prisoner did not deny; and the absence of any one else in the office.

Richard Pickering, his breast heaving with a noble grief, that none else could have been guilty, was not one publicly to denounce his brother. He affected to assume his innocence, and he stood by him to afford him all the countenance in his power.

The facts were testified to—those gathered on the first moment of discovery, and others since. Dance spoke of the jangling—as he still called it—between the clerk and his young master. Mr. Curry proved he was there, and that upon the termination he left Mr. Stone and William Pickering alone, and he could see that they were not friendly. This was about twenty minutes past ten. Mr. Curry added, in answer to a question, that he had heard nothing of William Pickering's intention to depart home; on the contrary, he said he should be at the office all day.

Yes, but then he had not opened his mother's note, interrupted the prisoner, who up to this point, acknowledged all that was said to be correct. But, he continued, the instant he read the note, he started for home, knowing how late there was to leave, and he told old Stone that he need not be cross on Richard's account any longer, for after all he was going to be his own master. Hence no more.

Mr. Curry resumed. A little before eleven he went back to the office, to say he'd take the hope at the price offered, and was horrified to find old Mr. Stone on the ground, as he thought, dead. He raised an alarm; some people ran in from the street, and he went himself in search of Dance, whom he found in the warehouse; somebody else ran for a constable, others for a surgeon. Of course the conclusion arrived at was, that Mr. William Pickering had done the deed.

The bench appeared to be arriving at the same conclusion. "Not so fast, gentlemen," said William Pickering's lawyer, and he put forth another plea.

It was Mr. Kilpin the hop-mechanic, a gentleman well known in the town. He deposed that he had called in at the Messrs. Pickering's office that morning between half-past ten and eleven. Mr. Stone was alone, writing at his desk. He stayed talking to him three or four minutes, and left at a quarter to eleven. He was enabled to state the time positively from the fact, that—

"Why, then, it could not have been William Pickering; he was at home at that very time," burst forth Mary Barber.

The bench listened her; but she saw now why she had been brought to the Guildhall.

Mr. Kilpin resumed, taking up the thread of his sentence as if no interruption had occurred. "From the fact, that as I passed St. Nicholas' Church, it chimed three quarters past ten. I was on my way to catch the Pershore coach, for I was going by it as far as Whittington, and it was at that moment turning the corner of Broad Street. I had to make a run for it, and to believe me, and the coachman pulled up opposite the Old Bank. When I got back from Whittington this afternoon," added the witness, "I accidentally met Mr. William Pickering's lawyer, and learnt what had occurred."

Next came the evidence of Mary Barber, that William Pickering was in his mother's house at three-quarters past ten. Of course there could be no further doubt of his innocence after this. Meanwhile the prisoner had been writing a few lines with a pencil on a piece of paper, and it was passed over to his brother. Something in the demeanor of one of the witnesses as he gave his evidence had powerfully struck him.

"I have an idea, Richard, that the guilty man is Dance. Take care that he does not escape. He has done this, he may also have been the pilferer of your pretty mark. Try and get it all cleared up, for the sake of the mother's peace."

"For the sake of the mother's peace!" echoed Richard, with an aching heart. "Poor William! little dreams of the blow in store for him."

"Did not dream, Richard Pickering," he said. Giving a hint to the officer to look after Dance, he pressed up to his brother, then being released from custody.

"William," he whispered, "tell me the truth in this solemn moment—and it is more truly solemn than you are as yet cognizant of—have you really not touched that missing money? As I lay awake last night thinking of it, I began to fancy I might have been making a mistake all through. If so—"

"If so, we shall be the good friends that we used to be," he interrupted William, as he clasped his brother's ready hand. "On my sacred word, I never touched it; I could not do so; and you must have been prejudiced to fancy so. I'll lay my money Dance will turn out to have been the black sheep. Both looks and tones were false as he gave his evidence."

And William Pickering was right. Dance was so effectually "looked after" that night, that some ugly facts came out, and he was quickly taken into custody. True enough, the black sheep had been nobody else. He had quickly pilfered the petty sum of money; he had struck down Mr. Stone as he sat at his desk, to take a couple of sovereigns he saw lying in it. The old gentleman recovered, and gave evidence on the trial at the following March Assizes, and Richard and William Pickering from henceforth were more closely knit together.

But the singular circumstances attendant on the death of Mrs. Pickering—her apprehension for murder (it could be nothing less), that appeared to Mary Barber—became public property. People in talking of it, mostly with timid glances backward and hushed voices, grew to call it "The Ghost of the Hollow Field," and for a long while neither girl nor woman would pass through it alone.

And that is the ending, and if I have been sadly minute in regard to the dress, or other points, I only reiterate the minutiae given at the time by Mary Barber. The woman—and she was a good, and honest, and truthful woman—believed in her dying day that the spirit of her sister came to lead her to the house (where otherwise she would not have gone) there to meet William Pickering, and so be the means of establishing his innocence.

BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

BY THOMAS SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A SECRET REVELATION.

When the woman Marie, taking herself into her own confidence, after the fashion of many a French woman, told herself that Henri Duplaine was at White Grange, she stated nothing more than the truth. The Canadian was there in hiding; and there also, as a matter of course, was the faithful Antoine. Duplaine, in the first instance, on leaving Llan Lodge, had really taken the way to London, although the police were strictly looked in their efforts to trace him, and had there lain up in a laundry for a while, till the heat of the pursuit had in some measure died away. Marie had been shot up at White Grange all this time, so which place, as soon as his plans were ripe, Duplaine himself made his way, in the disguise of a Frenchman, with an organ at his back, and there he was shortly afterwards joined by Antoine. Their dangerous move had not been made without a purpose, purpose over which the Canadian's mind had been brooding ever since his flight from Llan Lodge, and which he was now prepared to put into execution. The carrying out of this design had been delayed for several weeks in consequence of the unavoidable absence of Clotilde, Llan Lodge's French maid, who, as a great favor, had been lent by her ladyship for a couple of months to a particular friend about to proceed to Paris for a short time, whose acquaintance with the French language was of a limited character. Clotilde's presence at Llan Lodge was now back again, further delay was unavoidable.

William, Duplaine had said nothing to Antoine as to the nature of the great scheme which had been ripening in his brain for so long a time; but now that the eve of the night itself which he had fixed upon for his secret expedition had arrived, there was no necessity for further reticence, more especially as he needed the assistance of that devoted servant. The last room in White Grange, a room seldom used by the family, and considered to be the right of a state porter, had been given up to Duplaine. He had swung a sort of hammock, in one corner of it; and in this room he slept, undisturbed, and took his meals, and once and again played a



her bonds, or at least to get rid of the gag; but all her efforts proved utterly futile, and only seemed to have the effect of rendering her a faster swimmer than before.







